

for curing disease and prolonging life, but also for transmuting all metals into gold."

Numerous accounts are extant of gold being really produced in this way from common metals, as lead and tin, some of which were really believed as authentic narrations of matters of fact by enlightened chemists of the 17th century. A very brief extract from one of these accounts may interest as showing how the change was said to be effected; it is given on the authority of M. Gros, a Genevese clergyman, of the most unexceptionable character, and at the same time a skilful physician and expert chemist. "About the year 1650, an unknown Italian came to Geneva and got introduced to M. Gros as a person able to converse in Italian, and after about a fortnight he began to complain of poverty; this frightened M. Gros who thought he was going to try and borrow money of him; however, he only asked him to find a goldsmith willing to lend the use of a room where they could work in secret and also the necessary apparatus and materials. A goldsmith was found who readily furnished crucibles, pure tin, quicksilver, and other requisites, and then left his workshop to the operators. The Italian melted the tin and poured the heated quicksilver into it, and at the same time projected a red powder enclosed in wax into the mixture, and the result was the production of six ingots, which the goldsmith who was called in to examine them declared to be gold, purer than any he had ever worked upon, and the greater part of them, for the smallest ingot was given to the goldsmith, was sold for its weight of Spanish gold coin."

It is hardly necessary to say that such a story cannot be true, and although it has been said of such accounts that unless we reject all historical evidence, we must allow those which have such character and testimony to be entitled to some confidence, Mr. Brande sums up the case by saying, "that all the histories of transmutation are of a suspicious character; sometimes the fraud was open and intentional, seconded by juggling dexterity; at other times the performers deceived themselves; they purchased what was called a powder of projection, prepared by the adepts, containing a portion of gold, and when they threw it into the fire with mercury, and found that portion of gold remaining in the crucible, they mistook its source. But the cases which are quoted as least exceptionable are often exactly those which are really impossible, namely, where the weight of the powder of projection, and of the lead or other base metal taken conjointly, was exceeded by that of the gold produced."

I may state that there is, perhaps, no sane chemist in the present day who believes it possible to convert one simple body into another.

The principal benefit derived from the labours of the true Alchemists was the invention of various furnaces and apparatus still in use, but they had con-